

COMPARATIVE LITERATURE ANALYSIS OF THE FOLKLORE BETWEEN *JAKA TARUB* FROM INDONESIA AND *NIU LANG AND ZHI NU* FROM CHINA

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ABSTRAK

Cerita rakyat yang dimiliki suatu negara juga dapat ditemukan di negara lain dengan tema atau motif yang sama. Karena banyaknya cerita rakyat di seluruh dunia, ternyata cerita rakyat dari Indonesia memiliki banyak kemiripan dengan cerita rakyat dari China, salah satunya adalah cerita rakyat Jaka Tarub. Penelitian ini dilakukan dengan menggunakan analisis sastra bandingan terhadap dua legenda tersebut, peneliti menggunakan pendekatan sastra structural dan komparatif. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk (i) menemukan persamaan dan perbedaan struktur dan (ii) unsur cerita dari kedua cerita rakyat tersebut. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah metode deskriptif. Proses pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan mengidentifikasi, membaca, dan menulis laporan penelitian. Analisis data menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan lebih menekankan pada teknik analisis isi dengan membandingkan kedua cerita sebagai data. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan adanya persamaan dan perbedaan struktur cerita dan unsur budaya. Namun baik cerita rakyat *Jaka Tarub* maupun *Niu Lang and Zhi Nu* tidak saling mempengaruhi karena mereka merepresentasikan ciri khas masing-masing yang merupakan gambaran dari masyarakat tempat mereka berasal.

Kata Kunci: cerita rakyat *Jaka Tarub*, cerita rakyat *Niu Lang and Zhi Nu*, sastra bandingan, struktur cerita, unsur budaya

ABSTRACT

Folklore that belongs to one country can also be found in other countries with the same themes or motifs. Because there are so many folk tales throughout the world, it turns out that folk tales from Indonesia have many similarities with folk tales from China, one of which is the Jaka Tarub folk tale. This research was carried out using comparative literary analysis of the two legends. The researcher used a structural and comparative literary approach. This research aims to (i) find similarities and differences in structure and (ii) story elements of these two folktales. The method used in this research is descriptive method. The data collection process is carried out by identifying, reading and writing research reports. Data analysis uses a qualitative approach with more emphasis on content analysis techniques by comparing the two stories as data. The results of this research show that there are similarities and differences in story structure and cultural elements. However, both the Jaka Tarub and Niu Lang and Zhi Nu folk tales do not influence each other because they represent their respective characteristics which are a reflection of the society where they come from.

Keywords: *Jaka Tarub folklore*, *Niu Lang and Zhi Nu folklore*, comparative literature, story structure, cultural elements

INTRODUCTION

The folktale is a traditional story that grew in society since ancient time. A folktale is a folk story considers really happened which is told primarily for entertainment despite depicting truth and containing moral lesson[1]. Folktales are often regarded as belonging to a particular place or area. However, in fact, a folktale of an area sometimes has similarities with other areas, even fairy tales in certain countries sometimes have similarities with the fairy tales in other countries. From the motives of the same story in different places as well as at different times and at the same time [1] and [2]. The folktale is included in the oral folklore category with the folklore genre.

The word folklore comes from two words, namely stories which means knowledge passed down orally, and people which means a group who adhere to the same culture. Thus, folklore is

subjectively acquired knowledge that is passed down by word of mouth in the form of stories [3]. Folklore is any type of folk traditions, such as traditional belief, heritage, culture and customs [4]. According to [2], folklore is all about hereditary traditions, art, etiquette, behavior, and life of ancestors.

According to [1], folklore is divided into three major groups, namely; myths, legends, and folktales. The myth is a story that has a historical background, believed by the community as a story that really happened, considered sacred, contains many things that are miraculous, and generally figure by Gods. Events took place in another world, or in a world not as we know it today, and occurred in the past and generally tell the occurrence of the universe, the adventures of the gods, and so on. Legend is an ancient folklore story that has something to do with the historical event of a place. Legend is considered to be true by the owner of the story, but it is not considered sacred. Legends figured by humans who have extraordinary traits, and often assisted by magical creatures. The folktale is a story that does not really happen, especially about the weird events of ancient times. Fairy tales is included as folklore stories that are not considered to really happen and are told primarily for entertainment, although many of them also depict the truth, containing moral lessons, or even satire.

Folklore belongs to the community, not to the individual. Folklore as a source of local wisdom that must be preserved because it can be used as a subject so that its sustainability is maintained [5]. Therefore, people traditionally spread and pass it down from generation to generation in different versions [2]. The current reality depicts that people have abandoned folklore because modern society considers it irrelevant to their lifestyle and needs. Furthermore, it indicates the young generation's lack of interest in knowing culture through folklore [6]. One of the old literary genres, the story of consolation, served to comfort the heartbroken. Society passes this kind of story orally from one generation to the younger generation [7]. One example of a consolation story is *Jaka Tarub* and *Niu Lang and Zhi Nu*, which conveyed an angel and a human marriage.

First folklore is *Jaka Tarub*, this folktale tells a story of Jaka Tarub, a young man, encounters seven beautiful bathing angels, one of whom is Nawang Wulan. Captivated by their beauty, he hides Nawang Wulan's clothes to prevent her return to heaven. When the angels leave, Nawang Wulan remain behind and marries Jaka Tarub. They have a child, but Nawang Wulan eventually discovers her clothes and returns to heaven, leaving Jaka Tarub heartbroken. Their daughter grows up, seeks her mother in heaven, and successfully convinces Nawang Wulan to return. They reunite with Jaka Tarub, and they all live happily ever after [8]. And another folklore that will be compare is *Niu Lang and Zhi Nu*, it tells the story of Niu Lang, a poor and lonely cowherd, who meets Zhi Nu, a beautiful weaver girl who is actually a fairy from heaven. Niu Lang hides Zhi Nu's clothes while she bathes, forcing her to marry him. They live happily together and have two children. However, when the Heavenly Queen discovers Zhi Nu's absence, she orders her return to the heavens. With celestial soldiers' help, Zhi Nu is separated from Niu Lang. Heartbroken, Niu Lang attempts to follow Zhi Nu to heaven, but the Milky Way, a river of stars, blocks his path. His sincere tears move a flock of magpies, who form a bridge with their wings so he can cross the Milky Way. Once a year, on the seventh day of the seventh lunar month, known as the Qixi Festival or Chinese Valentine's Day, the magpies form a bridge again for Niu Lang and Zhi Nu to reunite briefly [9].

In this study, researcher will examine the similarities and differences of the story structure and cultural element of the two folktales, both *Jaka Tarub* and *Niu Lang and Zhi Nu*. There is a previous study that was researched by [10] with the title *The Comparative Historical Study of "Malin Deman and Puti Bungsu" Legend from Indonesia with "Niu Lang and Zhi Nu" from China*. The result of that study is differences with this study. The result of that study is to find four motifs in the folktales, there were (1) the motif about women and family, (2) the motif about color, (3) the motif about number, and (4) the motif about animals. These motifs indicate a cultural connection between the two nations, Indonesia and China. While, the result in this study indicated that there was a both similarities and differences of story structure and cultural elements. But, the origin of the folktale in that study is similar with this study, that is between Indonesia and China. Another previous study is from [11] entitled *A Comparative Study: The Folktale of Jaka Tarub (Indonesia) and Tanabata (Japan)*. One of the origins of the folktale is difference with this study. That study chooses to compare folktales between Indonesia and Japan, while this study chooses to

compare folktales between Indonesia and China. But, the aims of that study are similar with this study, that are to find the differences and similarities story structure of folktales and cultural elements of folktales. All of these titles have the same story and background, but have different character names from each region. Both stories exposed the similarities and differences of literary and cultural kinship patterns in term motifs.

In addition, culture can be sufficient to help the challenges and efforts to promote their rights represent [12]. However, in general, we can say that both were the same legend, but the story's origin was different, one from Indonesia and the other from China and Japan. In Indonesia and some various countries, especially Asia, similar stories were also widely known, although with different titles. For examples, in Vietnam, there was a legend of “Lang and Chuc Nu”, in the Philippines, it was entitled “Seven Young Sky Women”, which was told by Richard Darson in the book folktales “Told Around the World”, and in Europe “Swan Meiden”. [13] has compiled books in six volumes that contains various motifs and indexes of folklore around the world, entitled the Folk Literature Motifs Index: Classification of Narrative Elements in Folklore, Ballads, Myths, Fables, Medieval Romance, Example, Fables, Jest-Books, and Local legends.

The essence of comparative literature according to [14] is an attempt to improve the understanding of the objects studied. Literary work is a reflection of life in society [15]. Through literary works, the author seeks to express what society experiences. According to [16] the purpose of that is to make the work look more lively and attract the attention of readers. To understand a literary work in a period of time, it is necessary to compare a work with other work so that the same or different properties are found between the work in a certain period of time [14]. Comparative literature is a literary scholarly part that studies the correlation between literature and literary comparison with other fields [2]. The term comparative literature, in practice, involves the field of literary studies and other problems, so comparative literature has a very wide study because it involves other elements outside literature study.

In the comparing process, [17], stated that comparative literature is an approach in the literature that does not produce its own theory. In other words, any theory can be utilized in comparative literary research, in accordance with the object and purpose of the research. In principle, in comparative literature studies, the use of comparison methods is a major step. Therefore, in comparative literature, the process being carried out is comparing. So, comparative literature is an approach in literature that does not produce its own theory, which examines the comparison of literary inter-country by comparing literature with other fields, and in its assessment can use any theory based on the goal it wants to achieve.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The method used in this study is a comparative descriptive method to find the similarities and differences between the tale of *Jaka Tarub* and *Niu Lang and Zhi Nu*. The obtained data were then analyzed using the comparative descriptive method. The descriptive method examines the status of a group of people, objects, conditions, the system of thought, or the class of events in the present [18]. The goal of the descriptive research is to make a description, illustration or image systematically, factually and accurately related to facts, characteristics as well as the relationship of investigated phenomenon.

The techniques of collecting data in this study used documentation technique. The technique of analyzing data used content analysis by comparing two tales as the data. The source of data for this research was the tale of *Jaka Tarub* and *Niu Lang and Zhi Nu*.

FINDING AND DISCUSSIONS

After analyzing and comparing the story structure as well as the cultural element of the tale of *Jaka Tarub* and *Niu Lang and Zhi Nu*, it was found that there were similarities and differences in the story structure and cultural elements of those two tales. Those similarities and differences were as follows:

The similarities of Story Structure and Cultural Elements

- a. Story structure

From the story structure, the similarities in the tales of *Jaka Tarub* and *Niu Lang and Zhi Nu* were as follows:

- 1) The theme of the stories of *Jaka Tarub* and *Niu Lang and Zhi Nu* was the same; the union of an angel and a human.
- 2) The subjects of the two stories desired angelic clothing in both instances. The subject of the tale, *Jaka Tarub*, adopted the angel's attire. In a manner similar to the story of *Niu Lang and Zhi Nu*, the guy too donned angelic attire.
- 3) The subject was successful in persuading the objects to go their houses and live with them there together in the stories of *Jaka Tarub* and *Niu Lang and Zhi Nu*.
- 4) Women characters (objects) were willing to get married men characters (subject) in the stories of *Jaka Tarub* and *Niu Lang and Zhi Nu*.
- 5) Both in the tales the husbands were both left by their wives who returned to heaven. The husbands in the stories of *Jaka Tarub* and *Niu Lang and Zhi Nu* were all abandoned by their wives after they went back to heaven.

b. The Cultural Elements

Viewed from its cultural elements, the similarities in the tales of *Jaka Tarub* and *Niu Lang and Zhi Nu* were as follows:

- 1) Livelihood System
Both traditional Javanese and traditional Chinese livelihood systems had the characteristic that the majority of people were reliant on agricultural output.
- 2) Technology System
Both traditional Chinese and traditional Javanese societies at the time were already familiar with the technologies used to construct homes and manufacture clothing, demonstrating the closeness in technological systems.
- 3) Knowledge System
Both traditional Javanese and traditional Chinese societies at the time were already aware with the system of knowledge about the natural condition surrounding them due to similarities in the elements of their respective knowledge systems.
- 4) Social Organization System
The similarities in the element of social organization systems in both traditional Javanese society and traditional Chinese society were as follows:
 - a) In general, Chinese and Javanese cultures emphasized diligent women.
 - b) In both Javanese and Chinese cultures, a wife may ask for her husband's divorce for a specific reason.
- 5) Religion
Both traditional Javanese and traditional Chinese societies had a religious component, and both had members who believed in magic. It was derived from the community's earliest conceptions.

The Difference of Story Structure and Cultural Elements

a. Story Structure

In the structures of the stories, the tales of *Jaka Tarub* and *Niu Lang and Zhi Nu* had the following differences:

- 1) The subject in the story of *Jaka Tarub* was shown as a peasant boy who always had the time to indulge himself, whereas the subject in the story of *Niu Lang and Zhi Nu* was portrayed as a village child who constantly put in hours of labor.
- 2) In the story of *Jaka Tarub*, Nawang Wulan (object) left Jaka Tarub (subject) because she was upset that her husband had lied to her by hiding the clothes she was looking for, whereas in the story of *Niu Lang and Zhi Nu*, Zhi Nu (object) left Niu Lang due to the wrath of the Heavenly Queen, who commanded the Queen Mother to take Zhi Nu back to heaven.
- 3) In the story of *Jaka Tarub*, the subject was unable to travel to see his wife in heaven; but, in the stories of *Niu Lang and Zhi Nu*, the subject's spouse attempted to travel to heaven in order to meet his wife.

- 4) In the final scene of the *Jaka Tarub* story, Nawang Wulan returns to the earth and settles down with Jaka Tarub and her daughter, whereas Zhi Nu was unable to do the same for Niu Lang and her two children in the *Niu Lang and Zhi Nu* story.
- b. The Differences of Cultural Elements
Viewed from the elements of culture, then in the tales of *Jaka Tarub* and *Niu Lang and Zhi Nu*, there were differences in cultural elements. The differences included:
 - 1) Festivals
There is no special festival related with the tale of *Jaka Tarub*, but it is frequently performed as a traditional Javanese dance or theater piece during numerous cultural events and festivities. During the Qixi Festival, commonly known as the Chinese Valentine's Day, the story of *Niu Lang and Zhi Nu* is honored. Numerous traditions, prayers, and rituals commemorating love and passion are part of this event.
 - 2) Religion
Because a person's dream was considered to be a clue (wangsit), Javanese society placed a great deal of faith in them. Meanwhile. The concept of dreams was not accepted in Chinese culture.
 - 5) Art
Basically, the art has been known to both Javanese and Chinese people. Just as *Jaka Tarub's* flute was a clear illustration of Javanese culture's art in the *Jaka Tarub* narrative, Chinese culture's art was not as clearly portrayed in the story because there was no musical instrument or artistic performance.

People could think that the stories of *Jaka Tarub* and *Niu Lang and Zhi Nu* as stories concerning the Javanese and Chinese social groupings from both societies. *Jaka Tarub* represented the underclass in Javanese society, whereas Nawang Wulan figure represented the rich class. in the Chinese civilization, the young man or Zhi Nu image symbolized a cowherd. The girl's parents served as the nobility at the same time. The relationships between the two plays' principal characters both symbolized the relationship between the low class and the high class and showed how the lower classes try to fit in with the upper class.

The willingness of female characters to marry male characters was depicted in both the stories of *Jaka Tarub* and *Niu Lang and Zhi Nu*. The distinction was that one was brought on by coercion or a sense of powerlessness, whilst the other was brought on by a sense of debt. The distinction between these two tales was that each one depicted the actual circumstances of community life in their own societies. The cultural conditions of the Javanese and Chinese people, which made women the weak party and men the dominating party, were described in the truth of the tales.

Both stories Intergroup marriage was discussed of *Jaka Tarub* and *Niu Lang and Zhi Nu*. The impoverished in Javanese society were the ones that desired intergroup marriage, while the wealthy class opposed it. In Chinese civilization, the upper class society forbade marriages between the lower classes and the higher classes. The Javanese and Chinese populations, in particular, shunned inter-marriage marriages, as evidenced by their status men, not the other way around. The existence of an enduring ideal and the transient ideal was communicated by Javanese and Chinese civilization through the tales. A union of like-minded factions is the most successful and long-lasting. An intergroup marriage is one that is not ideal.

While the husband in the stories of *Niu Lang and Zhi Nu* attempted to follow his wife to paradise, *Jaka Tarub* did not attempt to follow his wife to heaven. The stories portray Javanese and Chinese social customs. Jaka Tarub's choice to forego pursuing his wife exemplified the “*nerimo*” Javanese character, who believes that life is pre-planned so that all that is required of people is for them to live it. In contrast, the husband attempted to pursue his wife in the *Niu Lang and Zhi Nu* tale. This incident exemplified how Chinese people have a mentality that is uncompromising in its pursuit of its objectives.

According to the findings of the aforementioned analysis, the stories of *Jaka Tarub* and *Niu Lang and Zhi Nu* were each independent literary works that had no influence on one another. Despite sharing similar story motives, the analysis revealed differences in both story structure and

cultural aspects of the two nations. Therefore, polygenesis, a literary creation resulting from the invention of the independent invention or parallel invention, was most likely the origin of the phenomena of motive similarity in the story. It indicates that even though the locations were different, the same plot motive might occur simultaneously. The similarities between Indonesian and Chinese society was probably caused by the marital and non-ideal aspects of both societies.

CONCLUSION

Based on these findings that had been done on the tale of *Jaka Tarub* and *Niu Lang and Zhi Nu*, it could be concluded that there were similarities and differences in the tales of *Jaka Tarub* and *Niu Lang and Zhi Nu*. These similarities and differences included the structure of the story and their cultural elements reflected in the tales. The similarities of the story structure are covered; theme of the stories, the objects wanted by the subject (subject tried to get an angel dress), subject of the stories (subject left by their wives); whilst the differences in the structure of the stories covering the subject of the perpetrator, the subjects' motive for getting the objects, the object's departure to heaven and the object's parents' attempts to separate their daughter from the subjects. Based on the results of the cultural elements analysis contained in the tale of *Jaka Tarub* and *Niu Lang and Zhi Nu* including festivals, religion, and art. The similarities of the cultural element in the tales of *Jaka Tarub* and *Niu Lang and Zhi Nu* included livelihood system, technology system, knowledge system, social organization system, and religion. The similarities and differences contained in the tales of *Jaka Tarub* and *Niu Lang and Zhi Nu* provided a clear description of the characteristics of each tale that described the culture of the people of both countries.

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